

*Washington, DC* -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) yesterday reiterated his call for additional protections from the environmental and public health risks associated with hydraulic fracturing while questioning U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson during a House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee hearing.

"As advancements in high-volume hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling have allowed gas companies to access previously unavailable gas reserves, I believe we're playing catch up in trying to understand the risks this process poses to the environment and public health," said Hinchey. "It seems to me that when your water has been fine for decades and then all of a sudden massive drilling operations begin and your water turns foul, it's not hard to figure out what happened."

Hinchey expressed strong support for the EPA's request for additional funding to study the risks of hydraulic fracturing and asked how new efforts will address shortcomings in the current body of research. Specifically, he asked about the EPA's release of a draft study report into ground water contamination complaints near Pavilion, Wyoming. The agency has drilled its own deep water monitoring wells and detected benzene concentrations well above Safe Drinking Water Act standards, high methane levels, and synthetic chemicals, like glycols and alcohols consistent with gas production and hydraulic fracturing fluids.

Earlier this year, Hinchey asked President Obama to back stronger environmental and public health standards to protect against the risks of hydraulic fracturing. The congressman has also called for an expansion of the ongoing EPA study, which he jumpstarted through legislation that was signed into law in 2010. The current plan does not include a study of air pollution and other health risks that have been closely associated with fracking.

Hinchey is a leader in the effort to protect drinking water and the environment from the risks of hydraulic fracturing. He is a co-author of the FRAC Act, which would mandate public disclosure of chemicals used in frack fluid and allow the EPA to regulate fracking activities under the Safe Drinking Water Act.